

PLANMARYLAND PLANNING AREA - AGENCY REVIEW SUMMARY COMMENTS

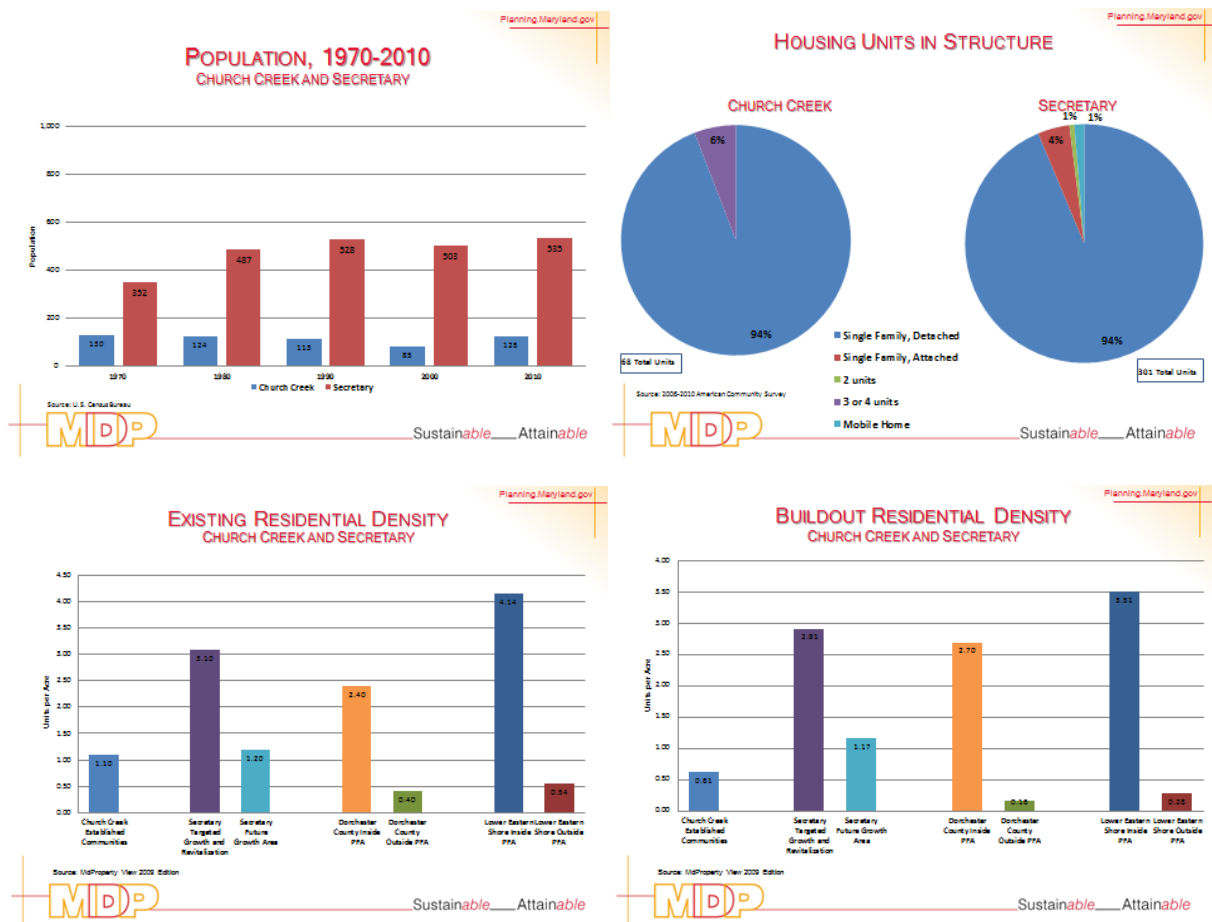
Applying Jurisdiction: Town of Church Creek (Dorchester County)

Date of Summary Comments: 5-3-13

Overview of Existing Community

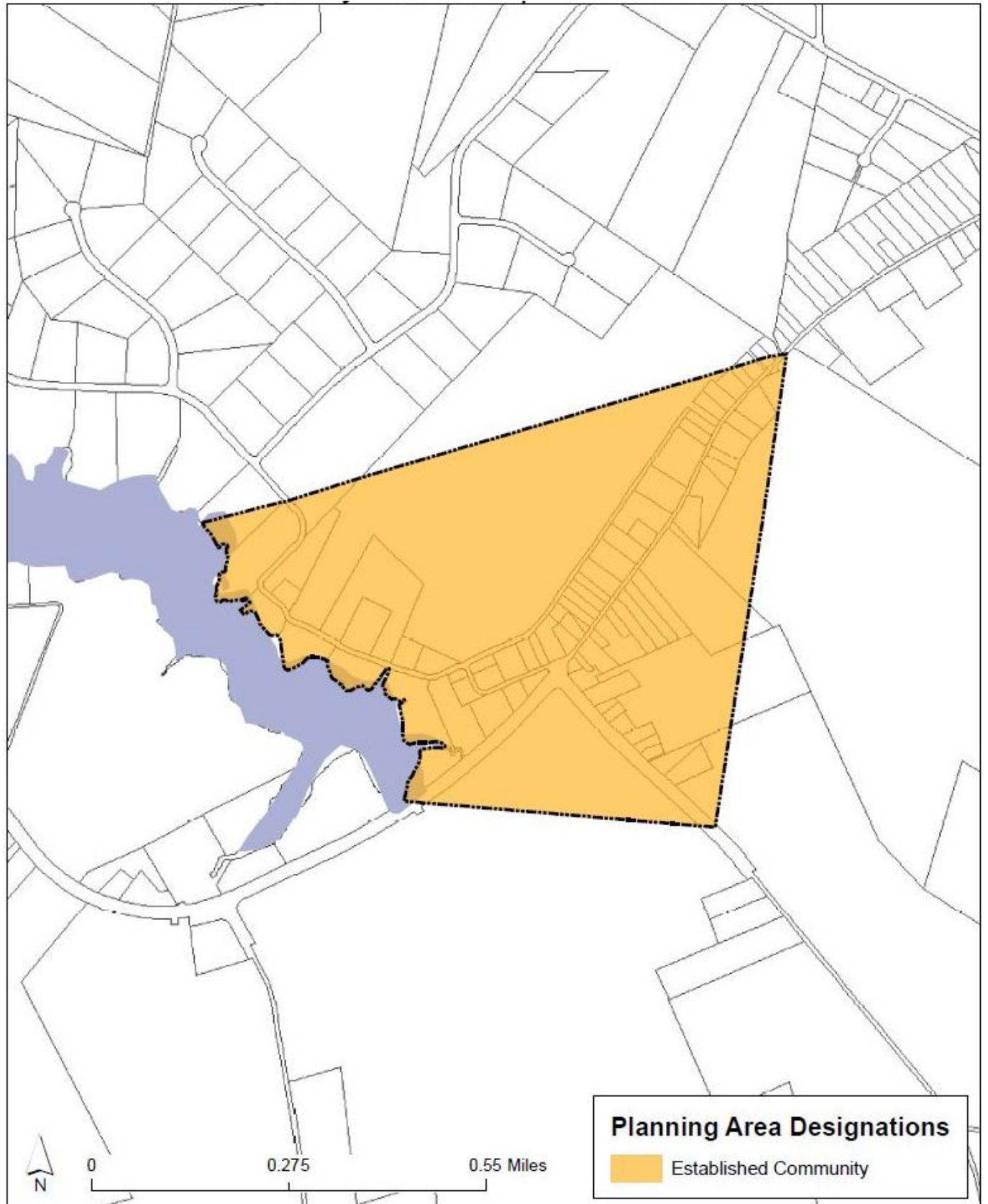
The Town of Church Creek, which encompasses approximately 192 acres, had a 2010 Census Population of 125 persons. The entire Corporate Limits are designated as a Priority Funding Area (Municipality). The Town is primarily residential in nature with approximately 64 acres of residential land use, 119 acres of vacant land, and the balance of land use of Commercial land Use (5 acres) and Public/Institutional land use (4 acres). The Town's Comprehensive Plan, adopted October 17, 2005, has not been updated with a Municipal Growth Element, and therefore, does not have a designated municipal growth area.

Summary Indicators



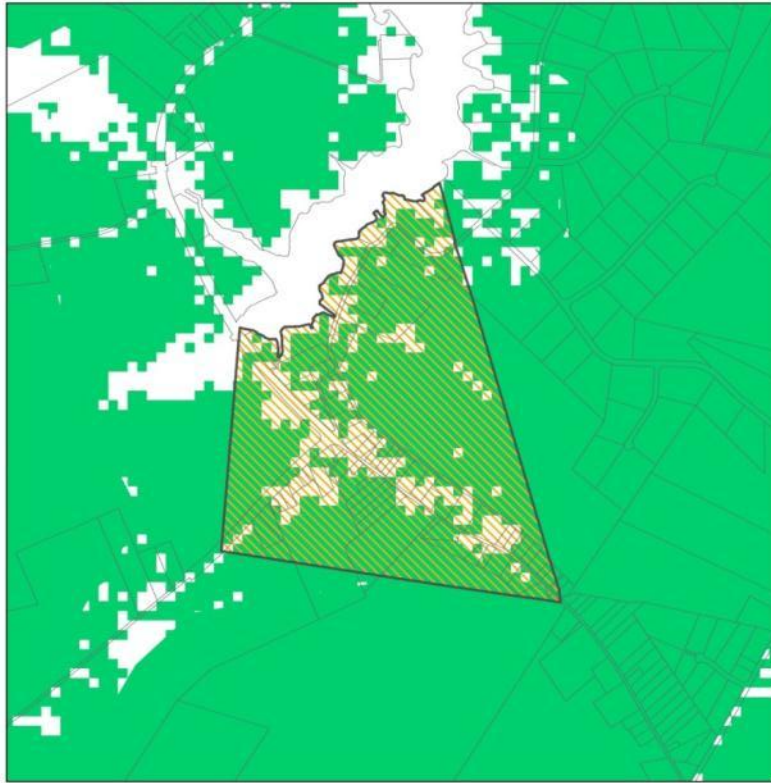
The Smart Growth Subcabinet on April 24, 2013 endorsed, as proposed, the Town of Church Creek's Established Community Area (ECA), as well as identified the following Preservation/Conservation Planning Areas - Natural Resources and Climate Change Impact, as depicted on the following maps, for incorporation into PlanMaryland.

Town of Church Creek
PlanMaryland Planning Areas (Places)

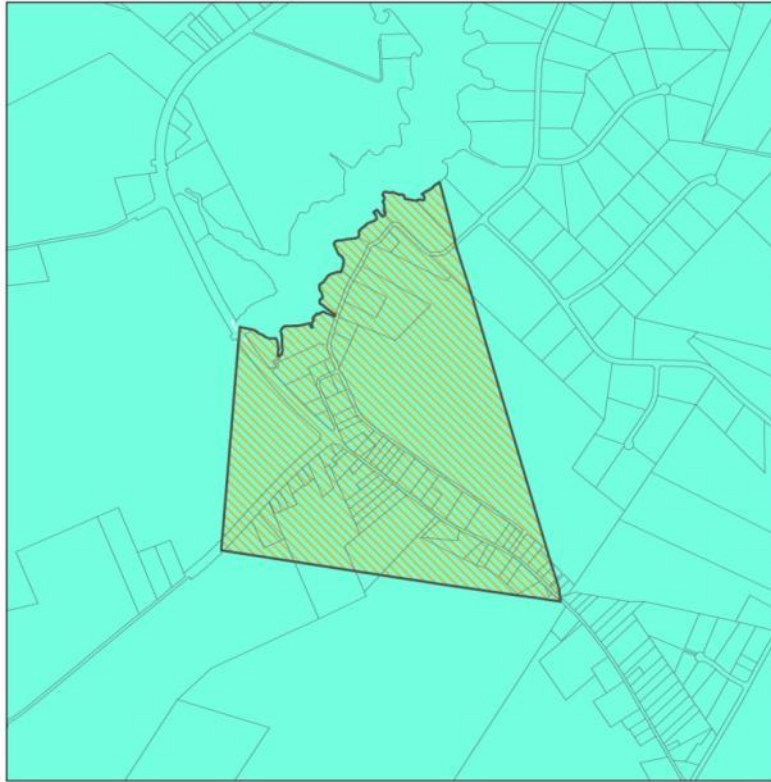


Town of Church Creek PlanMaryland Planning Areas

Natural Resource Areas



Climate Change Areas



- PlanMaryland Planning Areas**
- Targeted Growth & Revitalization
 - Established Community
 - Future Growth
 - Large Lot Development
 - Rural Resource Areas
- Rural Legacy Areas**
- Natural Resource Areas*
 - Climate Change Areas

* Natural Resource Areas include Priority Preservation Areas, Green Ports, Targeted Ecological Areas, Wildlife & Rare Species Habitats, Forests Important for Water Quality, and Forests and Green Infrastructure. Areas not shown but should also be considered are Green Ports Non-Tidal, Tidal Bay and Coastal Ecosystems Fisheries.



Assessment of Church Creek’s Established Community Planning Area (ECA)

The proposed ECA encompasses the entire municipal limits, which is a Pre-defined Priority Funding Area (Municipality).

A. Location Guidelines.

Consensus of Core Agency Review: Proposed Town of Church Creek ECA complies with Location Guidelines – YES

Comments and Observations:

The proposed Established Community for Church Creek meets the locational criteria for this PlanMD designation as the entire municipal limits (which coincide with the proposed PlanMD Established Community) are designated as a Municipal Priority Funding Area. For a community this size, the ECA designation is appropriate. For a larger community we might ask the town to include other designations, such as Future Growth for undeveloped parcels. The fact that the town lacks independent zoning authority and that some parcels are bisected by the municipal boundary means that the Town will need to work closely with the County in land use planning.

At this time, the town has not submitted a Sustainable Community application.

B. Other Levels of the Planning Area Guidelines: Purpose & Intent, Supporting Objectives, and Local Management & Planning Practices.

Purpose & Intent:

Comments and Observations:

The Town’s Comprehensive Plan reflects the purpose and intent of the ECA by supporting a commitment to maintain existing services and facilities needed to preserve the existing quality of life in the community.

Land Use Objectives:

Comments and Observations:

The Church Creek’s Comprehensive Plan outlines several Land Use Objectives and Policies that are supportive of the PlanMD “Established Communities within PFA” designation through the water and sewer service, transportation, and other community facilities that support the existing land use pattern, as indicated in the Land Use Plan. The policies in the Town’s comprehensive plan also encourage the redevelopment and re-use of vacant buildings.

The objective of “appropriately scaled neighborhood commercial uses” incorporated into “residential areas” suggests that there is local support for improving access to goods and services that could be reached by biking or walking from within the town.

Land use objectives seem reasonable. However, the town faces special challenges given that some parcels are bisected by municipal boundary.

Transportation Objectives:

Comments and Observations:

The Church Creek’s Comprehensive Plan outlines five Transportation Objectives and Policies that are supportive of the PlanMD “Established Communities within PFA” designation by having new streets and sidewalks designed for uniformity to fit in with the character of the existing neighborhoods and shall

facilitate circulation within the community, and to promote pedestrian travel and reduce automobile trips.

The SHA is working with Church Creek on a streetscape project that includes bicycle and pedestrian accommodations and drainage improvements. The effort is not considered to be inconsistent with the transportation objectives proposed for the Established Community Areas.

It should be noted that State HWY Routes MD 16 and MD 335 pass through the proposed Established Community Area. Presently, the nearest proposed state trail is the Cambridge to Blackwater Pedestrian path, which is 3 miles east of Church Creek.

Housing Objectives:

Comments and Observations:

The Church Creek's Comprehensive Plan outlines three Housing Objectives and Policies that are supportive of the PlanMD "Established Communities within PFA" designation by encouraging the development of safe housing compatible with the existing residential character of the Town, by promoting affordability through flexible zoning and incentives, and by facilitating creation of accessory housing in certain neighborhoods.

Housing objectives of integrating affordable housing through flexible zoning seems reasonable for this small community, but again will require coordination with the County.

Economic Objectives:

Comments and Observations:

The Church Creek's Comprehensive Plan outlines four Economic Development Objectives and Policies that are supportive of the PlanMD "Established Communities within PFA" designation by encouraging regulations be streamlined and flexible to encourage economic growth projects in Town; encouraging traditional business activities that support residential areas shall be encouraged as part of the Town's redevelopment efforts in designated neighborhoods of the Town.

There is language in the application re: Economic Development and how the Town will work with the County regarding enhancements to tourism destination development. We recommend the Town will work with the County for Climate Adaptation and resource conservation planning in a similar way.

Public Needs that are Addressed:

Comments and Observations:

The public needs, as expressed by the citizens (through their elected officials), is not extremely burdensome to the Town of Church Creek. The Town simply desires to maintain its current character as a "bedroom community" (medium density rural village). The desire to maintain the current character of the Town is reflected in the Town's Comprehensive Plan (adopted 10/17/2005).

Focus on heritage tourism seems reasonable given the town's size and location.

Shortcomings in Addressing Public Priorities:

Comments and Observations:

The Town's shortcomings to address the public priorities are substantial. While having an adopted Comprehensive Plan, the Town's plan is relatively dated (8-years old), and does not address the requirements of HB 1141 (that is, no adopted Municipal Growth Element, or Water Resources Element [WRE]). The Town did contract a (grant writer) consultant to develop a WRE; however, the draft was never adopted by the Elected Officials. Another major limitation for the Town to meet public needs, as described in PlanMD, is that the Town has not adopted a Zoning Ordinance or Subdivision Regulations.

The Town relies on Dorchester County for Zoning and Building Permit review and approval. One of the major reasons for the lack of local adoption of Implementation Ordinances is that the Town does not have the technical expertise (or money to hire consultants) to develop these ordinances, as well as implement and administer the local laws, once adopted.

C. Assessment of PlanMaryland Implementation Strategy Opportunities & Constraints.

Opportunities for State Agency Implementation:

Comments and Observations:

The Town of Church Creek's comprehensive plan supports maintaining the quality life of this small community. While the Town has limited financial resources, there is an interest in achieving the purpose and intent of the Established Community cited in PlanMaryland. Given its limited resources, the Town of Church Creek can benefit from the local government technical assistance that MDP provides jurisdictions, like Church Creek. While the Town does technically exercising "planning authority", the Town has no zoning, no long range Capital Improvement Plan or other plans at this time to support PlanMD.

Established Communities designation supports maintenance of existing buildings infrastructure consistent with this community located in a priority funding area.

Implement Strategy Reservations due to Constraints:

Comments and Observations:

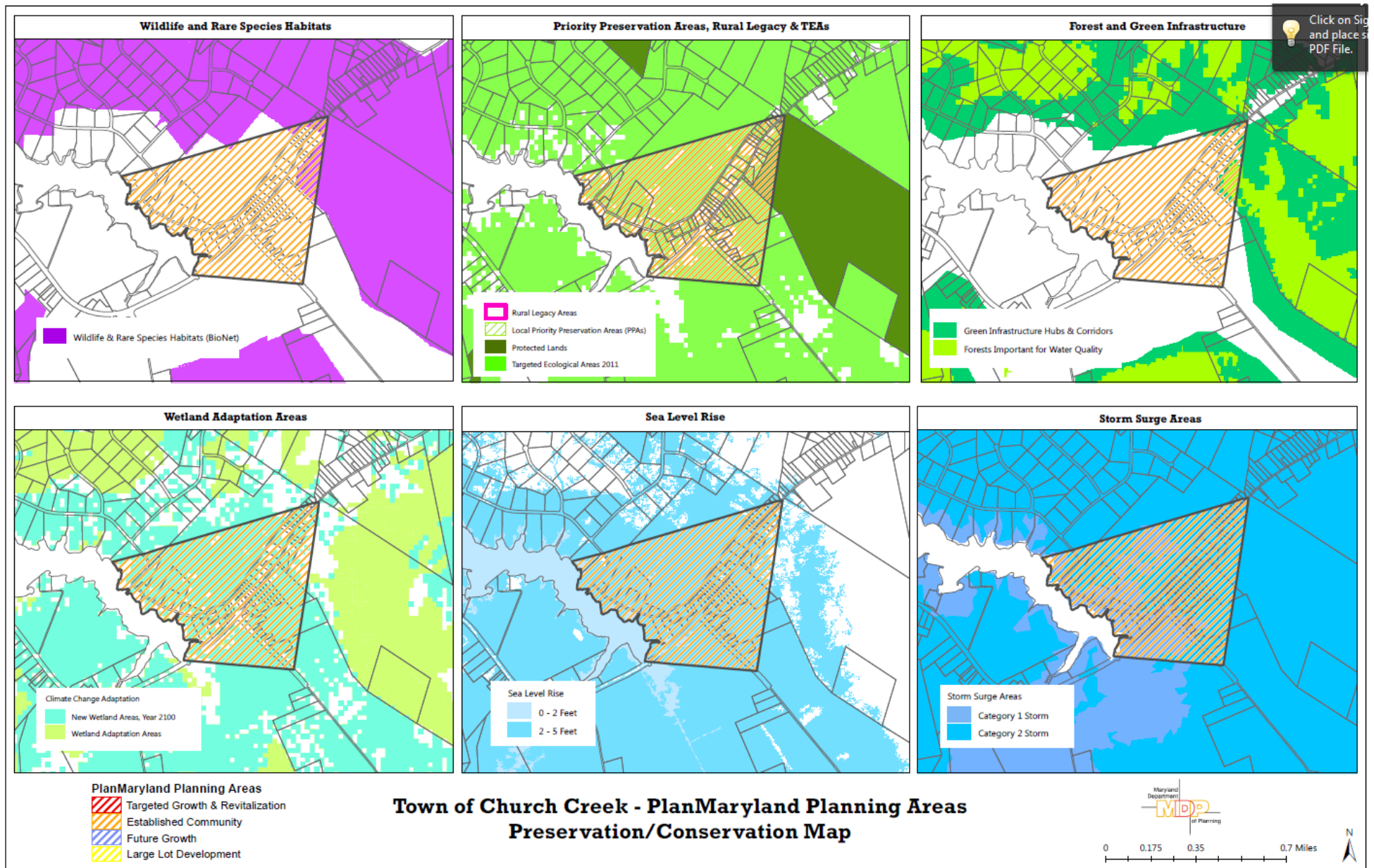
Due to limited financial resources of the Town (125 residents), the Town does not have the revenue to hire new staff (the Town only has a DHCD Circuit Rider for staff) if it were to adopt local laws or programs in furtherance of PlanMD. The Town has proposed the ECA to improve the potential for State support to address the residents' desire to maintain status quo in the community.

Other Comments and Questions about Implementation Strategies & Constraints in this Area.

Future state planning efforts, including targeting and prioritization, will include the mapping and identification of preservation/conservation areas through the available GreenPrint and Climate Change Impact Area mapping resources. See the maps below. Use of state programs and resources in "Place" Planning Areas which overlap with "Preservation/ Conservation" areas currently targeted by State agencies will be subject to additional review and evaluation, to take into account the goals of both designations and ensure the most appropriate state actions and investment of resources.

State investment in Preservation/Conservation Areas will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis considering existing structures and investments, the needs, the potential hazards and long-term benefits, and the type of investment. Each agency evaluates state resource allocations differently based on its mission responsibility. State capital investments may be minimized in areas susceptible to Climate Change Impact and/or designed to be more resilient to impacts, like sea level rise.

The State looks forward to partnering with the local communities on the identifying strategies for the conservation of natural resources and the reduction of climate induced vulnerability.



GreenPrint Mapping Data that impact Church Creek:

- Within a High Priority Tidal Fisheries Watershed – Recommend minimizing any increases in impervious surfaces
- Tier 3 BioNet areas in northeastern area. Recommend maintenance of contiguity with other forest resources
- There is an area of agricultural fields and some forests in the established area, approximately 119 acres
- Targeted Ecological Area due to Climate Change Adaptation Area values:
 - Wetland Adaptation - Whole Town is mapped as Category 1 & 2
 - New Wetlands Area - Whole Town
 - 2- 5ft Inundation Areas - Whole Town
- Recommend manage these lands for future wetland condition – keep farming but plan for more inundation.

General Preservation/Conservation Area Comments on Church Creek's Planning Area Application:

- Church Creek did not designate any Preservation/ Conservation Areas. The Town is strongly encouraged to consider using the PlanMaryland overlay process (specifically the Natural Resource Areas and Climate Change Impact Areas) to plan for the protection and existence of coastal hazards and forestry resources.
- The Town of Church Creek is largely located in an area of current and future wetland migration and will be readily impacted by sea level rise, storm surge and other coastal hazards due to its low elevation. Because of the high vulnerability of the entire town to coastal hazards, it is recommended that new development be planned with this in mind. With this regard, we commend the town for adopting 2' freeboard above the base flood elevation. Other suggested recommendations for Dorchester County can be found in *Sea Level Rise: Technical Guidance for Dorchester County*: http://dnr.maryland.gov/CoastSmart/pdfs/SeaLevel_Dorchester.pdf

General Climate Comments:

- Communities are encouraged to designate Climate Change Impact Areas at the local level and to develop strategies to avoid or reduce impacts. Strategies can be incorporated into existing elements (i.e., land-use, transportation, water resources) of a local comprehensive plan or a community could develop a stand-alone climate change adaptation element. Policies can also be developed that address one or more specific climate-related impacts.
- Maryland shorelines are highly susceptible to coastal hazards, such as hurricanes, nor'easters, floods, and storm surge. Almost 70% of Maryland's shoreline experiences severe erosion and more than half of some counties lie within the 100-year floodplain. Because of Maryland's vulnerability to coastal hazards, special precaution needs to be taken when planning for the future. The State is currently planning for one foot of sea level rise by 2050 and 3-4 feet of sea level rise by 2100. Even the slightest rise in sea levels will exacerbate already existing hazards. As storms like Sandy become more common and flooding becomes more frequent, planning at the state and local level should begin to reflect more extreme events in existing planning processes.
- It is important to consider sea level rise in hazard mitigation and emergency management planning, as well as in land-use planning. If a community is located in an especially vulnerable area that will be impacted by 0-2' of sea level rise inundation or the storm surge and flooding associated with a Category 1 hurricane, special attention should be paid to current and future growth areas. Additionally, special care should be taken to preserve existing wetlands and allow for their migration

- inland. Wetlands will help to naturally protect a community from gradual sea level rise, as well as storm events, by helping to accrete sediment and absorb wind and wave energy.
- There are resources currently available through Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and partner agencies to help communities plan for sea level rise and more frequent coastal flood events.
 - DNR's Chesapeake and Coastal Service (CCS) has developed a CoastSmart Communities Online Resource Center that includes web-based planning tools, storm surge inundation and sea level rise maps, training programs, staff resources, and access to local grants including the CoastSmart Communities Initiative (CCI) competitive grant program. This program provides financial and technical assistance to local governments to promote the incorporation of natural resource and/or coastal management issues into local planning and permitting activities. <http://dnr.maryland.gov/CoastSmart/>
 - The Maryland Emergency Management Agency's (MEMA) Hazard Mitigation Program provides resources, tools, and grants to assist communities in mitigation projects: <http://memamaryland.gov/memacomcommunity/Pages/Mitigation.aspx>.
 - The Maryland Department of the Environment has developed model floodplain ordinance language: http://mdfloodmaps.com/pdfs/MD_FPM_Model_Ordinance.pdf.
 - The Woods Hole Sea Grant, Cape Cod Commission, and University of Hawaii Sea Grant have also developed model bylaw language that may be used to regulate development in coastal hazards area: <http://nsgl.gso.uri.edu/hawau/hawaut09001.pdf>
 - The farm fields surrounding the area could be mapped resource areas (as an overlay) to better join with adjacent county mapping in the future.
 - We would encourage keeping and expanding tree cover to maintain the character of an established and pleasant community, as well as improve water quality. Free tools to help communities assess tree canopy are available at <http://www.itreetools.org/>. The iTree Canopy tool allows a quick, quantitative measure of existing tree canopy and other tools can help identify where expanded tree canopy could provide the most ecological and community benefits. Generally, expanding tree cover near water and drainage pathways is a priority and most likely to support healthier fisheries.
 - We would encourage involvement in local natural resource-based markets, reflecting the town's heritage of wooden shipbuilding. Examples include farmer's markets, arts/craft shows featuring local products, maritime history event, or new uses of local wood for high-efficiency wood heating.